

White Butterflies

by Ashfae

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Summary: Tomoe's thoughts at a climatic moment. Contains major spoilers for Kenshin's past.

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> <p> She wasn't cold anymore. Strange. Her life was ending, and all she could think was that she didn't feel cold. For the first time in a year, for the first time since she'd heard of her fiancée's death... <p>

"_Tomoe..._"

His arms were around her; maybe that was why she didn't feel the cold. So strange to think that this boy, this _boy_, who was beaten and bleeding, the most feared killer of the era, who had murdered the man she loved...this boy was keeping her from feeling the cold. Her face was wet from falling snow, splashed blood, tears...she could feel his tears landing on her skin where his cheek was pressed against hers.

"It's not okay...it's not okay for you to die!" His voice was choked, raw with pain and grief.

Husband...

She tried to focus her eyes on him. It was difficult; she was growing less and less attached to her body by the moment. Memories flitted through her mind like white butterflies--how she had hated him, then been confused by him, then hated herself for feeling pity, sympathy,

liking...how betrayed he felt.

Ah, there--her eyes focused on him. His eyes were light violet, not the amber they had been earlier. Such sweet eyes, when the cool, indifferent madness of the hitokiri was not there. His delicate features marred by the scar on his cheek, crossed now by the knife that had flown out of her hand. _One for Akira-san, one for me...how much easier for us both if you'd been the monster I wanted you to be, husband! But now you'll have to live with these scars, and I how know they will haunt you..._

But still, it's better...I could never have made you happy, never accepted...never completely forgiven...

She smiled up at him; his eyes widened in further shock and despair, his arms tightening around her.

Even if I love you, I could never have forgiven you, so... "Better this way," she whispered.

He shook his head violently, unable to respond. She reached up one trembling hand and brushed his cheek, just below the crossed scar. "Don't cry."

He caught up her hand in his, holding it against his chin, still shaking his head slightly in denial. "Tomoe, please..."

It was getting harder to breathe, but she was still warm, still smiling. She looked up past Kenshin's face at the sky, a haze of white...snowflakes drifting downward like white butterflies dancing, like memories. _I wish...that I could be snow, falling towards you..._ The flakes landed gently on her skin and melted in an instant. _So soft, like the touch of wings..._

Kenshin was still holding her, but she couldn't feel him anymore. She let her eyes close. _Sayonara...my second beloved._

And then it was dark.

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> <p> This short piece was inspired by Krista Perry's phenominal Tomoe story, The Snow Raven. May she continue it someday.

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